

Indian Art and Culture at Crossroad: Literary Representations of Border, Margin and Poetics of fragmented self

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Abstract

Indian Culture and Art preserve its stint glory from past. With increase in technology and change in society, Indianness, Indian Ethos, Culture and Art continued to debated by new upcoming discourses in literature that are in context of Identity, Cultural differences, Migration, Displacement, and Travel. The present paper deals with how Indian Culture, artistic literary experiences were certain factors that was responsible for transition from roots to routes. Next ,apart from these, how socio-cultural events, travel, politics of displacement and diasporic nostalgia effected literary cultural expressions, thus inviting altogether a distinct build up of 21st century culture.

Keywords: Art, Culture, Indian, Writing, Literary, Transition

The pristine glory of Indian Art and Culture is ever interesting to know, explore and decode. The diversity of Indian Culture ever attract scholars from world-wide. Multi-faceted shades of dance, art, architecture, painting, poetry, folk art, theatre , narratives, film representation and literature makes it more enriching and versatile. There is no theory prescribed to understand but diversified ways expand one's horizon, to perceive and understand it well. Yet, another big challenge that pose in-front of scholars, is to understand how to harbinger old and new, how to preserve old with new. Is growing literary representations on various aspects, make one really enlightened that's the big question. With decade every time the mode of representations have changed that bring new dimension of understanding.

With the advent of Modern and Post-Modern era, literary representations underwent drastic change. New themes of fragmentation, isolation, dislocation, broken home, tormented bond of relationships, migration, marginalisation, border conflict, diasporic consciousness,

alienation, issues of identity, sense of loss, loss of family values, cultural differences widened territorial range of discourses. The new era welcomed and gave new experiments. From 1830 and 1917 after two world wars, globalization countries like Trinidad, Mauritius, South Africa, Malaysia, Australia, United States, Canada, and Britain went through colossal heaps of change .

To quote in words of Avtar Brah,

“ the new diasporic writings signified multi-locality across geographical cultural and psychic boundaries. The concept of Indianess, Indian Culture and Art were at Crossroads.”(From Sugar to Masala Writing by the Indian Diaspora, 277)

Even writer Sudesh Misra discusses the ensuing fluidity , brought,

“ the semi-voluntary flight of indentured peasants to non-metropolitan colonies such as Fiji, Mauritius, Surinam, Guyana between 1830 and 1917.” During post modern era there was a dispersal of new class of migrants, laborers to thriving metropolitan countries such as Australia, U.S. , Canada and Britain.”(From Sugar to Masala Writing by the Indian Diaspora, 277) The writing bring forth new communities and many new unknown issues that enriched literary expression. The literature of diaspora bring forth new angles. To understand it well it can be easily classified into old diaspora and new diaspora. Old Diaspora is made up of communities that are from different province. It is about community who speak different language and practise different religion. They are force to leave ‘home’, and search for home for many unknown reasons. They may left their homeland due to migration , colonialism or capitalism. Old Diasporic writing discuss different issues from new diasporic writing.

Now the world of literature faced many problems related to identity politics in a globalized world. It offered a new perspective to probe into psyche of rootlessness, politics of representation and fragmentation of home in between space and deterritorialized belonging. The important work by Salman Rushdie’s *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism* 1981- 1991 offers a complex negotiation of diasporic identity in terms of feelings of displacement, discontinuity and rootlessness. It also keeps in mind how in the past the concept of Indianess has gained wide circulation in the history of migration and displacement.

The issue of displacement was not only the one, but another issue that came was of the problematic identity politics.. It altogether offers a new perspective of self. Salman Rushdie's book is divided into Six parts: *Midnight's Children*, *The Politics of India and Pakistan*, *Literature*, *Arts and Media*, *Experience of Migrants*, and the question of Palestine. The Exiles that are shown in book deals with faint memories, and childhood memories are monochromatic. (Rushdie, 1991, 9)

As Rushdie writes,

‘ We will in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, Imaginary Homelands, India of the mind.’ (Rushdie, 10). Rushdie uses the expression ‘*Imaginary Homelands*’, as a powerful metaphor to elucidate the shattered vision of the migrants who were in abroad. For these migrants home is not a real place, but an imaginary rendition authored by discontinuous fragments of memory conceived in imagination.

Its not altogether to discuss critically the experiences of migrant living but to understand how the socio-cultural factors which are responsible in shaping diasporic writings. Diasporic writings pave way to analyse the complex negotiations of border, margin, and address the transition from roots to routes.

All diasporas writing share some where common feeling of nostalgia and unhappiness. Diasporic writings refer to people who don't feel comfortable in their identity, either they are looking and searching for their lost identity, they want to explore more of themselves perhaps accumulated fear assimilated them to behave, react and respond in a precarious ways. It may lead them to massive communal schizophrenia. They are at criss cross with culture, reality, imagination, displaced, self-imposed exile and are continuously haunted by different radical which they carry with in.

Diasporic Writing can be categorized into two sub-sections: Gritit and Non- Gritit Diaspora. Gritit Diaspora refers to the migration of indentured Indian labourers to Fiji. These Indian labourers were brought to Fiji by mutual consent of European settlers. The laborers work on sugarcane plantation and that provide effective environment to Vijay Mishra to narrate their experiences. Seepersad Naipaul is also concerned with Gritit Diaspora. He invokes community feeling and bonding in his short stories, which appeared in 1943 titled *Gurudeva and other Indian Tales*. These tales were again revised and republished in 1976 as *The Adventures of Gurudeva and other Indian Tales*. Later on his sons Shiva Naipaul and Vidiadhar Naipaul continued the tradition. They depicted in his works, *The Chip-Chip Gatherers* (1973) and *Beyond the Dragon's Mouth* (1984) sensitive depiction of plantation colonies. Even on V.S. Naipaul

who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2001 wrote upon various issue of cultural identity, Indian sensibilities, Caribbean sensibilities . He open up new vistas for writing. Naipaul's outlook on nation, culture, border is expressed in works like *The Mystic Masseur* (1957), *The suffrage of Elvira* (1958), *A House of Mr. Biswas*(1961) , *In a Free State* (1971), *The Mimic Men* (1967) , *A Bend in the River* (1979) , *Half a life* (2001), . The depiction of Hanuman's House in ' *A House for Mr. Biswas*', outlay unique sense of homelessness, longing for home as expressed by the use of metaphor ' home'.

The search for home, its psycho-cultural recognition and integrity is recurrent in K.S. Maniam's *The Return* (1981). Maniam is an Indo-Malaysian written in Tamil background. He spent his childhood in Kedah, Malaysia and for his education , he went to England. In his works he explores the plight of rubber planters indentured in Malaysia. His work ' *The Cord*' (1983), *In a Far Country* (1993) creates a fictional world . Another writer Subramani (b.1943) goes step ahead and wrote on new angles of alienation, dislocation in *Th Fantasy Eaters and other stories*.

Non-Grimit Diaspora :

Another category for easier study is non-Grimit Diaspora. It discusses about an intimate representation of homeland , address about the communities which were dislocated and made homeless by colonial history. It bring forth pain and pangs of dislocation. The major writers were Menon Marath (b. 1906), Santha Rama Ran (b.1923), Balachandra Rajan (b.1920), and Victor Anant (d. 1927). The most notable works of Menon Marath are *The Wound of Spring* (1960), *An Island for Sale* (1968), *Home to India* (1950), *A view to the South East* (1957), *My Russian Journey* (1959), Rajan in his work *Too Long in the West* (1961) shows the problematic dimension of returning home faced by an expatriate. Another writer Victor Anant represent India -Britain homelessness and divided self .

New Diaspora:

The new diaspora which came much later was altogether different . It celebrates the poetics of dislocation. The writers represented in their writing border conflict . The writings discover new and complex negotiations with new approach towards ethnicity, gender and class. To name a few writers were Ved Mehta, Vikram Seth, Rohinton Mistry , Salman Rushdie, Bharati Mukerjee, Meena Alexander and many more. There was a wide variety and range including history, fiction, theology, biography, travelogue, self conscious assessment , sexual awakening, father's struggle for financial independence, crime, migrancy, nationalism, politics,

agony of fragmented identity and family matters. Rohinton Mistry (b. 1952) in text *Firozsha Bag* (1987) expresses his unique Parsi sensibility and the notion of home, nation and identity.

Salman Rushdie (b. 1947) is one of the greatest novelists of India. His works *Midnight Children* (1981), *Shame* (1983), *The Satanic Versus* (1989), *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999), *Fury* (2001) noted for the magic realism and use of polyphonic language. His novels reveal nuances of fragmented self, celebration of marginal position. To quote, ‘Our Identity is at plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at times we fall between two, however ambiguous and shifting it is not infertile territory for a writer to copy. Another important narrative was of Bharati Mukerjee (b. 1940) who addresses the politics and poetics of fragmented self. Her novels depict the condition of the diasporic subject caught in the web of multiple loyalties. *The Tiger’s Daughter* (1972) represents the feeling of Tara who returns from New York and attempt to rekindle her feelings for Calcutta leads to the frustrated discovery about Calcutta, her friends and herself. In the novels of Meena Alexander’s they deals with the lives and problems of India Immigrant living in America.

Apart from the novels the diasporic articulation is reflected in poetry too. Many poets experience feelings of nostalgia. To name a few were Saleem Peeradina (b.1944), Agha Sahid Ali (b. 1949-2001), Sujata Bhatt (b.1956), and Chitra Banerjee .Agha Sahid Ali and Sujata Bhatt who reflects home as an imaginative space, stored memory images themes of sexual and maternal instincts, exploration of subjugated self. Chitra Banerjee offers a multifaceted portrait of India and Indian Immigrants in New Jersey. She shape new context of exploration, of rootlessness, alienation, memory and nostalgia.

‘An interesting poem in which describe how I become a writer’.Agha Sahid Ali depicts his longing for his homeland Kashmir. He offers intense experiences of dislocation and alienation. Although living in U.S.A. but his attachment to Kashmir is unbreakable where he is raised.He has emotional identification with North Indian Muslim Culture. Vikram Seth’s in his work *Mappings* cover a soul searching , analysis of self scrutiny, lost in self doubt and fragmented self. There were ample topics that were covered from love, nature, death politics , urban life and a wide range of travel.

So with growing and moving scene Indian literary manifestation underwent a drastic change. Artistic articulation covered wide range of discourse covering margin, fragmented identity, migration, immigration, home identity, alienation, and nostalgia . However these experiences of migrants, socio-political issues were instrumental in creating a new culture . the new dichotomies of Indian sensibilities pave a way to new outlook.

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